

"I've never sold an inch of land. I just don't want to do that," he said.

If the Howrigan clan has a leader and role model, Harold, at 81, fills the bill. His square face is topped by a puff of white hair, his ruddy complexion crinkled by the weather. It's a face that would look equally at home in a Tipperary pub, a testament to his purely Irish ancestry.

Like many of the Howrigan men, he seems gruff and a bit standoffish at first meeting. Howrigans have the "quiet gene," says his niece Kate Baldwin.

Over the kitchen table in the farmhouse he shares with his wife, Anne, or on a tour of the land they farm with their three sons, he expands. The gruffness melts into stories of childhood on the farm. He shows a visitor field after hillside field, not saying much, apparently for the pure pleasure of looking at the land and the results of a lifetime's work.

Land was "a treasure," he said, to the Irish farmers who immigrated to Fairfield from a country where land ownership was all but impossible for them. That fierce allegiance to one's own acres also runs in the Howrigan line.

Even in the hardscrabble days of the Depression, his father treated the land well—planting trees, combing stones from the rocky fields, preventing erosion. "He never cut a live maple," he said.

Harold and his sons use the latest technology in their sugarhouse, but they collect sap the way Harold's father did, with hanging buckets and sled-top tanks pulled by five teams of horses.

Horses don't require new roads to be cut and are easier on the land. "There's no substitute for horses gathering sap. They're nicer to work with, they come to you and stop. A tractor won't do that," he said.

With the other farmers of Fairfield, the Howrigans have created a town perhaps more pastoral than any other in Vermont. From many of Howrigan's hillsides, the view of corn and hayfields and grazing heifers seems to have changed not at all in a hundred years.

But does he value his land for its worth in bushels of corn alone? Or does he find it beautiful, as well?

"I think it is beautiful, and I work to keep it that way," he said, looking back toward the home farm. "I treasure it for its value as working land and for its beauty, too."

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### IN RECOGNITION OF DR. H. WESLEY TOWERS, JR.

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Dr. H. Wesley Towers Jr. upon his retirement as State Veterinarian after 37 years of dedicated service. He is a man with a kind heart, diverse interests and great abilities. Wesley embodies the best of Delaware.

"Doc," as he was fondly known, was born on August 15, 1942 in Wilmington, DE. He spent much of his youth with his grandfather, the farm manager on E.E. du Pont's Greenville, DE, estate, "Dogwood." He loved the country, the farm work, and the animals. When the local veterinarian came to tend the livestock, Doc knew what he wanted to be.

Doc graduated high school in 1960 from P.S. Dupont, and went on to study animal and poultry science at the University of Delaware, graduating

with honors and distinction in 1964. He spent the next four years at the University of Pennsylvania veterinary school, graduating in 1968, and went on to become Delaware's vet almost by chance.

After veterinary school, Doc took a job in Kent County as an apprentice to the State veterinarian. At the same time, Harrington and Georgetown race-tracks offered him a temporary night job overseeing racehorses. Several weeks later, the track vet had a stroke, leaving him unable to resume race work. The temporary job became a full-time, second job for Doc. The following year in 1969, the State vet retired and Doc was appointed in his place.

Doc has the Nation's fourth largest poultry industry to protect, a rabies epidemic to police, and race courses to regulate. Containing and excluding contagious and infectious animal and poultry diseases is his priority, with public enemy No. 1 being avian flu, a virulent respiratory ailment that devastates poultry. Doc and his team work hard at their jobs to ensure that any outbreaks of avian flu are contained.

During his time as State vet, Doc has received the Department of Agriculture's Employee of the Year award, the University of Delaware's Worrilow Award for service to agriculture and Delaware's coveted Award for Excellence and Commitment to State Service. At the University of Delaware, Doc is a part of the Agricultural Alumni Association, the Alumni Association board, the Career Planning and Placement advisory committee, the phone-athons, and the "Alumni in the Classroom" program.

Doc spends much of his free time championing causes in which he believes. He testifies in SPCA cases, including revelations over local "puppy mills." He is involved with the racing commissions, the State Fair Board and the Tri-State Bird Rescue group. In addition, Doc enjoys gardening, traveling, hunting, cooking and taking trips to the beach.

Doc is married to his college sweetheart, Sarah. The two met in a chemistry laboratory at the University of Delaware, and were married on June 25, 1966. They have two children, Laura and David, and four grandchildren, Mark, Annie, Matthew and Davey. Sarah describes her husband over almost forty years as a patient, kind and loving man who loves to be around people. He is fortunate to wake up every morning and go to a job that he loves.

After retirement, Doc plans to spend his time pursuing his hobbies, volunteering, and most importantly, continuing to raise his beloved Delaware blue hens. I rise today to honor Doc and to thank him for the friendship that we share. Through his tireless efforts, Doc has made a profound difference in the lives of thousands and enhanced the quality of life for an entire State. Upon his retirement, he will leave behind a legacy of commitment

to public service for both his children and grandchildren and for the generations that will follow. I congratulate him on a truly remarkable and distinguished career. I wish him and his family only the very best in all that lies ahead for each of them.●

#### THE VALUE OF RURAL HEALTH CARE

• Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I will take a few minutes to pay tribute to a group of people whose tireless, dedicated service to those in need too often goes unnoticed—North Dakota's and our Nation's health care providers. As I travel around North Dakota, I frequently stop in to visit hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. I am continually impressed by the quality, compassionate care that I see being provided by doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and other medical staff, as well as by the administrative and support staff.

Rural America depends on its small town hospitals, its tertiary hospitals, on physicians and nurses, nursing homes, those who provide emergency ambulance services, and many others to provide a seamless system of care. There are a range of challenges facing rural health systems, from difficulty recruiting and retaining staff and inadequate reimbursement to rising costs and reams of paperwork to fill out. Despite these challenges, our health care providers do an admirable job remaining focused on providing quality care.

Our hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics are also important engines driving North Dakota's economy. Health services account for 8 percent of North Dakota's gross State product. And health care providers are often among the largest employers in a rural community, representing about 15 percent of direct and secondary employment.

In short, a strong health care system is an important part of our rural infrastructure, and the people who make up that system have my deep respect and thanks. Over the years, we have determined that rural electric service, rural telephone service, an interstate highway system through rural areas, and rural mail delivery, to name a few services, make us a better, more unified nation. The same is true of rural health care, and I will continue fighting for policies that reflect rural health care as a strong national priority.●

#### COMMENDING HOME DEPOT

• Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to the Home Depot for the support, employment, and assistance it provides to the men and women of our active duty Armed Forces, Reserves and National Guard and their families.

Beginning with its founding by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank and continuing under CEO and President Bob Nardelli, the Home Depot has always been a great corporate citizen. Nothing